

November Newsletter 2009

“To climb a new tree is for the boy to discover a new world... he climbs into caves and crevices, clambers up trees and hills, searches heights and depths, and roams through fields and forests. Nothing seems difficult, nothing dangerous, when his own nature and his own mind will prompt him to do it” (Froebel, in Lilley, 1967:126)

Dear Parents and Friends of Cowgate,

As I write this newsletter it is black as night outside and the children are dancing in the garden with little torches (solar of course). I hope they will always remember the excitement of not being seen by the ADULTS!

One moment I treasure from today is when Paloma was baking her bread over the firepit, she looked like a happy juggler, with two sticks in her hands and damper bread at the bottom... the look on her face was... beautiful.

First of all, I would like to welcome Steph to La Camera dei Bambini. Steph is a student from a local college.

The following newsletter brings news of our ‘Tools for Life Event’; Our first Fair Trade minutes; Congratulations to Donna; Battleby Workshop by Jane and Donna; SPPA conference; Standard Life Awards; Kids for Kilts day; Collecting Children...Changes in Arrangements; Taking Harry home; Contact information on ‘Save Childcare

Vouchers' and finally, we had a very successful in-service day on Froebel, for this reason I have added an extract from De Lissa (1949) at the end of the newsletter, please disregard if it is of no interest to you...

Tools for Life

What a wonderful afternoon / evening we had on Friday. We have so many people to thank for making the afternoon / evening a success.

- *First of all thanks to the Growing Confidence Project for funding (in part) the tool bench.*
- *Hamish – (Catherine and Eleanor's daddy) did a marvellous job of opening the workbench and supporting the children using the tools. What a wonderful support you are Hamish...thank you so much.*



- *Reem – Nassers' mummy – for beautiful belly dancing*
- *Susie – Ben and Evie's mummy for touring our visitors*
- *Keith – Felix's daddy for building the firepit*

All the staff were magnificent...sharing their skills and time so generously, with wide smiles on their faces...(which may have had something to do with Michelle's mulled wine?)

Thank you to all the parents for attending. It was so lovely to see our children and their families return for a visit after starting primary school.

Fair Trade

Our fair trade meetings have begun. Karen very kindly gave me the minutes of the first meeting to share with you.

Fairtrade Minutes
Wednesday 28th October 2009

Present;

Catherine (pupil)

Miro (pupil)

Robert (pupil)

Donna Begg (Nursery Nurse)

Jane Garven (Teacher)

Karen Thomson (Depute)

1. Karen outlined the five goals required to obtain Fairtrade status; we talked through each goal and feel we are covering each with our various activities.
2. Robert told us that he knew about FT already "If farmers get FT they get more money". Miro said "They can buy more stuff". Robert said "They can get more food". Miro also had the idea of having two piles; one FT and one not then we can compare them!
3. Jane told us that she has a lesson plan for Mind Mapping which she will do with the older children in the room. They will use the FT logo as their focus. The room will also ask parents to collect FT wrappers for discussion and perhaps to make a display or chart. Jane would like a children's story book explaining FT, Karen will source this.
4. Donna pointed out that our FT lessons could also link to the curriculum. Jane said she would include the Mind Mapping in the room planning.

5. We discussed using more FT products in the Centre. Karen will find out how much it would cost to buy FT cooking chocolate for making crispies.
6. Donna would like to visit Towerbank PS as they have attained FT status. Karen will contact and arrange a visit. Jane wonders if we could have staff from Scotmid to visit us to tell us about FT.
7. Karen would like older pupils from St Thomas's to visit our children to talk about FT. Jane felt this would be beneficial for the children.
8. Catherine, Miro and Robert decided we should have name labels depicting the FT logo. Karen will ask Hazel to make.
9. Karen will contact our local Oxfam shop to arrange the sale of Christmas FT products within the centre.
10. Karen closed our meeting explaining that she will now begin the process of uploading our evidence onto the FT Foundation website.

Minutes by Karen Thomson

I am sure you will agree our children are very, very considerate of others.

Congratulations to Donna

Donna has completed her first aid training! Well done Donna. Donna will now plan visits to 'The Dell' for children on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Battleby for Donna and Jane

Jane and donna will be running a workshop “Risk, Resilience and how to Relax” three ‘r’s for outdoor learning for Scottish Natural Heritage at their centre at Battleby, Perth on Tuesday 10th November.

SPPA conference

Lian and I are talking at the SPPA conference on November 13th.

Standard Life Edinburgh Achievement Awards 2009

We entered the achievement awards this year and are attending the ceremony on Thursday 12th November at 4.30pm – 6.15pm. Many members of Cowgate community are attending. Should be a lovely event.

Kilts for Kids

Watch out for notices regarding this event. We are going to officially rename the music room to ‘Croilean’ which means little circle or ring of children.

Collecting Children Changes in Arrangements

In order to make things smoother for the children at home time, we are gathering the children together in the

'Croilean' place (old music room). We are beginning with the evening pick up at the moment; children will collect their belongings and head for the Croilean place. The adult will read a story / play music or some other calming experience. Parents can go directly to the Croilean space. Our aim is to begin this at lunch times too. You will be informed of this if and when it happens. Please let me know your thoughts on how you believe things are going 😊

Taking Harry Home

Please remember Harry likes going home with the children. Niamh took Harry home and had lots of fun.

Save the Childcare Vouchers

I know many of you are concerned about the loss of the childcare vouchers. I have quoted the information

Dear Carer,

We've had a tremendous response from carers, parents and employers across the UK wanting to help with our campaign to save childcare vouchers. Many of you have already signed the Downing Street petition: <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/keepvouchers/> If you haven't done so yet, please do try and find time to add your name to the list.

Also, why not print off a letter (on the website) and send it off to your MP – all you need to do is fill in your name, the name of your MP, sign it and post it off. The more letters an MP gets, the more seriously they will take the issue and consider doing something about it.

If you would like any copies of our campaign poster or flyer to put up and highlight the issue to your parents, please go on the website to complete your order form and we will mail them out to you as soon as possible.

If you are willing to talk to the media about the campaign, please let us know by emailing savechildcarevouchers@computershare.co.uk

You can also view the latest media coverage and general information on our blog site – www.vouchersblog.co.uk

Thank you for your support.

Reading

I do hope you enjoy this...it is very old. Legacies of the past...come back to teach us ☺

Education Through Play

Play, the most characteristic feature of childhood is the child's natural way of developing himself in body and mind preparing himself for the serious business of life. It is

an activity that arises spontaneously and is similar in type all the world over. Stern speaks of play as originating "in a deep compulsion of human nature that almost brings it into line with the compulsory function of instinct". It is true that the sequence of play interests never varies. Different types of play follow one another, reach their peak, and fade out to be replaced by the next in Nature's well-ordered succession. This sequence is closely related to general development.

Yet, though the child is to this extent under the "levelling influence of universal childhood", no two children play in exactly the same way. On the contrary every child reveals his nature and tendencies in a way that makes his play individually characteristic and self-expressive.

"To what extent do the play interests of the child today foreshadow what he will become tomorrow"? What influence have social and emotional experiences gained in one's play as a child upon such qualities as leadership, independence of thought and action, and the ability to get on happily with one's fellows later on? To what extent are the vocational choices, the hobbies and reactions of the adult, the direct outgrowth of the play preferences of childhood? Much further investigation is needed before these questions can be answered completely, but as we follow the course of development onward, we can see how closely the play life of the individual reflects the development of his whole personality, portrays his interests, his abilities, his past experience. Had we but

wisdom to read the signs, we should find in the child's play the surest index of his character".

Not only is play the surest index of a child's character, it is also an indication of the normality of his development and of his mental and emotional health. Every Nursery teacher should continuously watch her children at play, and should keep some record of it. She should also make as comprehensive a study as she can play itself, for this enable her to interpret and evaluate her observation, and give some insight into each child and the kind of help and guidance he needs. It will help her to understand when and how to come forward and when to leave him alone. It will also guide her in her choice of the materials and playthings most helpful for each particular phase of growth.

The Purpose of Play

Play in childhood is more than mere pastime or a means of recreation. It is the serious business of life. It is in a sense part of the food and drink by which the child builds himself in all-round strength and becomes a poised personality. Provided it is real play, free and spontaneous, initiated and directed by each child to meet his own needs – and is not teaching disguised as play – it is the only form of education that really educates in pre-school years. It is through play that the child strengthens and develops his growing body and establishes neuro-muscular co-ordination, control and skill. It is the means by which he develops his mind and teaches himself to think and reason, to compare and contrast, to judge and draw conclusions, to

plan and imagine and to use his mind in all ways necessary for intellectual development. Again it is through play that he establishes and maintains emotional balance, because of the outlet it gives for the expression of feelings and the release from strain it affords. Play indeed enables him to develop his patience, and persistence that he brings to his pursuits. In short it affords education of the most complete kind for body, mind, character and personality.

To deny a child space or opportunity for free play in all the varied ways necessary to development; to withhold from him his toys and material that make play really satisfactory, is just as serious as deprivation to the growth of intelligence and character as lack of food and free activity are to the growing body. It causes psychic malnutrition, and renders the child ill-equipped for the adventures of life. Modern life which crowds people into cities has robbed children of all classes of their natural play, and new means must now be found for restoring it. Large houses and gardens are rapidly disappearing with the result that there is little place for the child to call his own in the modern house or flat, and none where he can play undisturbed and continue his play progressively for days at a time. He is constantly required to give up space to adult needs. Woods and meadows are only available to the country child, and trim parks even when accessible are a poor substitute. Streets are too dangerous to be playgrounds they once were, while families, large enough to provide playmates of various ages, have practically disappeared. Natural material, too, is less accessible than it once was. Earth, sand, pebbles, seeds, shells are not

easily available, nor is there room today to keep the odds and ends that once accumulated in lumber rooms and back gardens and which led to such valuable play. Today the child must be content with the output of the commercial store, and many of the toys sold there have little permanent interest or real value. Finally he has to make do with toys that do not take up too much room, or that are not likely to prove too noisy for the adults in his small house.

Childhood is not, and never has been fully appreciated for itself. It is protected and safe guarded too often because it is a prelude to manhood and womanhood, and there are few who recognise the completeness and perfection of childhood itself.

Early Stages

Fingers and toes are the first playthings, but the child soon begins to clutch at other objects and to hold them firmly in one hand or another. His choice is indiscriminate, as is also the use he makes of the things seized. He waves them in the air, hammers them on his cot, sucks them or throws them away, regardless whether the object seized be a spoon, a rattle, a watch or a tea-cup! He is not the least interested in the object. His interest is centred in his own activity, and anything that aids or augments it is of value to him. This early form of play is called by Karl Buhler "function play", and is in one sense the only real play an individual ever knows. It is performed for its own sake, without any aim or object beyond the enjoyments of the movement involved. When play is pursued to attain some

goal, it ceases to be real play and becomes work. It is often said, and truly, that children work when they play and play when they work. This work attitude appears potentially even in infancy when the child becomes interested in the things he seizes. He examines them with care and even as young as ten months he begins to place them experimentally this way and that. He notices what happens to them as a result of his activity and the different uses to which things can be put. When he learns to use both hands simultaneously and conjointly, this added power enables him to look at two things at the same time, and to compare the object in one hand with that in the other and to place objects in relationship. His doing so is an indication of intellectual development.

Variety in Play

During pre-school years the child's play is of three main types (1) Active physical play by means of which the child co-ordinates and gains control of his body and its complicated mechanism; (2) play concerned with investigation, exploring and manipulation, that leads to mastery of material and creativity; (3) imaginative or dramatic play of the "Let's pretend" sort into which fantasy frequently enters. During these years children's play is sometimes sociable and shared with one or two others, sometimes it is solitary. Usually it alternates from one to the other. Through each type of play is specifically helpful to one or other aspect of growth and provides outlet for physical, intellectual and emotional energy, the child lives and acts as a whole in his play, and it is this

fact that makes it so harmonising an influence in the unevenness of growth. The personality reveals itself in the physical form, in intellectual qualities, in emotional states, but never loses its unity. In active bodily play the child's mind is also active, planning and directing all he does. He remembers his past experiences and uses them as a guide to present situations; he observes all that happens. He is alive intellectually and emotionally as well as physically. In fantasy or imaginative play, he moves about, lifting and carrying things, and uses his mind as well as his body in his make-believe. Imaginative play itself is constantly changing into intellectual investigation because of the way in which it creates practical situations which are then pursued for their own sake. "In all play three elements are always present, the linking up with the world of human beings, the essential human mastery of material and outward expression of inward experience, but are so interwoven that analysis is well nigh impossible. Yet herein lies the whole meaning of play and of life. We may endeavour to classify under social –functional and similar headings and produce statistical analysis, but life eludes statistics."

Active Play That Involves The Use of the Body

Play involving bodily movement, through chiefly characteristic of the two to three year old persists throughout childhood. It is to a large extent "function play." The child is not pretending to do or be anything and he has no conscious goal or purpose. He runs, jumps, swings and tumbles about just for the fun of it. Though it

is without conscious purpose it would however, be erroneous to think of it as purposeless. No spontaneous activity is meaningless, but arises to take its fitting place in nature's scheme of development. In active play the child aids body growth, establishes neuro-muscular co-ordination and gains control of his movements. The more varied the activity is, the more rapid the growth and all healthy children find it much more difficult, and certainly more fatiguing to be still than to be active. A great deal of the play of a two year old is of this active nature, walking and running along paths, up and down steps, climbing and swinging wherever possible.

To acquire physical coordination and control the constant repetition of movements is essential, the lifting and carrying of things of all sizes, including objects which require effort to move. As the child becomes confident of his power, he grows more adventurous, and it is necessary for him to find toys and apparatus that encourage him to be progressive in his physical development. Provided with the right material and opportunity to use it, the child will put himself through a comprehensive course of physical training as balanced and sound as any expert's plan could be. In free play with toys and apparatus that he enjoys, the child repeats movements over and over again gradually becoming more graceful and skilful, by eliminating and unnecessary movements or expenditure of energy...Active play should take place out of doors whenever possible.

Play Concerned with Investigation and Exploration

As soon as the child is able to walk and is capable of independent movement he begins to explore his world and experiment with things, investigating their nature and discovering what can be done with them. It is a type of play that persists throughout childhood and characterises the child's approach to every kind of new material. In its earliest stage, it is stimulated by the suggestiveness of the things that the child sees and handles, and his play is in the nature of reaction and adjustment to external stimuli. Experimental play has neither beginning nor end. The child does not persist in it for any length of time, and as he has little desire to pursue and plan or try to make anything specific, he does not seriously mind interruption. As with experience his interests widen and knowledge and skill increase he begins to be interested in the things he plays with and the various uses to which they can be put. Intellectual curiosity is aroused and also the desire to satisfy it. From tentative beginnings the child advances to thoughtful investigation and plays in a way that suggests that he is continually asking why? how? if? and answering his own questions and arguing things out in a way that becomes steadily more logical. It is, in fact, the beginning of research. Helped by suggestive material, the child can make good intellectual progress and set forth on a quest of discovery.

The four year old who does a great deal of practical reasoning in his play, needs many kinds of adaptable material with which he can experiment and use in a variety

of ways. The material should stimulate the use and exercise of sense perceptions and give opportunity for comparing and discriminating between extremes that are in great contrast and those in which the differences are slight. The toys should provide for manipulation in ways that involve judgment and decisions. Such play provides the concrete basis from which abstract reasoning and judgement can arise at a later age.

Play Becomes Work

When as a result of much experimentation the child is thoroughly conversant with varied material and has acquired mastery over it, he begins to use it with intelligent purpose. He thinks, plans and determines before he begins to play what he is going to do. Once this stage is reached the stimulus no longer arises from the suggestiveness of the material but from the child's own intelligence. It is his own ideas and desires and not external stimuli that prompt both his choice of material and the use to which he puts it. This thoughtful experimental play involves the use of past experience, memory, attention, concentration, imagination, and the ability to follow and work out an abstract idea. It is a much more complex performance than the simple and almost impulsive reaction to outward stimulus with which this type of play begins. It is purposeful from the beginning to the end. The following illustration given by Charlotte Buhler, serves to show the different way in which a child of three and a half and one of seven will use the same material. Both children found clothes pegs and

began to play with them. The three year old put them in a box which he fastened to a wagon, and went about selling them as bread rolls. The seven-year-old, after experimenting with them and the way in which they could be manipulated, began fitting them together, and made an aeroplane, say-horse and a motor-car. "The seven-year-old differs from the three-year-old child in two ways. (1) He tries to make something with his material; the younger child does not. (2) He tries to discover through his activity the best use for the material, that is, its appropriate use. He uses it specifically. The young child is unspecific; he uses the pegs for a purpose for which they are as ill or well suited as anything else. He has not developed either the power to construct or to treat his material as having specific qualities."

When the child begins to work to a plan and endeavours to make real things, his play should not be interrupted but he should be given the opportunity always to complete what he is doing. He resents interruptions at this stage as much as adults do when engaged in serious work. When he has learned habitually to follow a plan with perseverance and self-forgetfulness, he attains what Charlotte Buhler calls "school maturity"- that is the ability to undertake and carry through tasks and duties impersonally. If the child is constantly interrupted in his play and has only short intervals for it, he does not form the habit of concentration or attention, and remains infantile in his aspect of growth. When this happens the ex-nursery school child is a problem on entering the "big" school, for he is unable to tackle school work or to carry on without constant adult stimulation.

The child approaches each type of material with a two-fold interest. He wants to discover all the possibilities of it, and also his own skill in using it. Until he has achieved both he is not able to use the material as a means of expressing himself and his ideas. The child's progress in this way is clearly shown in his painting. At first he is content merely to daub the paint over the paper. It is a way of exploring the "paintness" of paint and of gaining control of the use of the brush. It is purely experimental. Next he begins to play with his own skill, making lines, circles, etc. and when by chance these strokes resemble something, or a teacher asks a tactful question, he decides that he has made a picture of this, or that and gives the name to his creation after it is finished. "Look! Look what I've done- its my dad", he exclaims excitedly. A little later he begins to name things as he makes them. "I am making the sun, this is the sea", or "now I am doing a boat", and in doing so is still to a large extent inspired by the suggestiveness of his achievement. Eventually, he acquires sufficient control of the material to use it as a means of saying something definite and announces before commencing his work what he is going to do. "I am going to paint an aeroplane flying over the sea. I want some silver paint, etc."

"The child passes from primitive pleasure in activity to pleasure in creation and production, an essentially human pleasure. Instead of pouring out energy in activity, we transfer it to material, and find pleasure in stamping out individuality on material. We express ourselves through it. With this are connected three important experiences characteristic of mankind. While active with

material man surrenders himself to it, masters it and puts something new into the world.”

A social element enters into play when the child begins to master his materials and to make recognizable objects. It enables others to enter into his play and his thoughts. This was illustrated when a child who had been scribbling with chalk suddenly exclaimed, “I’ve drawn a man.” He was so very excited, though it consisted of only of a head, that he took it around for every child in the room to see. Many of them showed great interest in it and laughingly pointed out eyes and nose. On returning to his table he said, “And now I am going to draw a very funny man.” He did so and on taking that round to be looked at, there was much laughter. Children often join together in play when a definite plan is being worked out, co-operating in a way that is not possible until their interests are objective.

Making Things

The desire to make things is strong in the child, and construction is a very general type of play. Possibly bricks satisfy this desire more than any other single material, and it is with bricks that he first begins purposeful play. He makes towers, trains and fences at two or younger. Bricks can be used for many different purposes and are equally satisfying to the two and five year olds, used either alone, or in combination with other toys. In carrying them about, in constructing simple towers or complicated buildings the child acquires a great deal of sensorial knowledge, e.g., of weight, size, perspective, balance and cohesion.

Manipulative toys and material objects that require to be matched, sorted and classified, are of value and help the child to gain manual dexterity, to master his material world, to grow aware of its possibilities, and to discover something about the operation of natural law.

When the child becomes interested in making real things, he requires the use of tools and material with which actual objects can be constructed. Hammers and nails, wood and varnish are necessary as well as some training in the technique of handling them.

Children require material that becomes progressively more difficult to handle and wider in possibility – things that challenge increasing skill and knowledge. At four years old, though they continue to use many of the same toys as younger children they use them in a different way, and require, in addition to simple bricks, for instance, those of more varied sizes and shapes with which they can make more exact representations of actual objects. The addition of arches and curves, cylindrical shaped bricks, half bricks and triangular ones enrich the possibility of brick play. Unless supplied with plenty of good material, four and five year olds become restless and rebellious. The “seniors” of the nursery school should show by their perseverance and absorption in play as well as by the quality of it, the good they have gained from two years already spent in the nursery (De Lissa, 1949)

Hope you enjoyed it...have we changed so very much?

Until next month

Lynn and the Cowgate Team

The



